

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With President Carlos Saul Menem of Argentina

June 29, 1993

President's Approval Rating

Q. How do you like your new popularity as a result of the attack on Baghdad?

The President. I think there's a lot of evidence that people are learning more about the specifics of the economic program again, too. I think that's a lot of it.

Q. Do you really think that's it?

The President. Absolutely, I do.

Iraq

Q. There were new threats from Iraqi officials this morning, threat of retaliation. Are you concerned about that, Mr. President?

The President. Well, we'll deal with those as they arise.

Haiti

Q. Are you going to discuss the Haitian situation with Mr. Menem?

The President. Absolutely, I will. I want to get his ideas. President Menem has been a real force for democracy and for human rights in our hemisphere. Argentina was extremely helpful in playing a leadership role in the recent Guatemalan crisis. And I want to know what he thinks about Haiti and what we might do.

Q. Are you going to sell him Skyhawks, 36 Skyhawks?

Economic Indicators

Q. [*Inaudible*—sir, last month after you took great pains to attach the jump to your economic program.

The President. They won't be up every month. But the economy in our country will have great difficulty in totally recovering in any short period of time from the traumas of the last 10 to 12 to 15 years. But I think that it's clear that if we can bring our deficit down, keep our interest rates down, we can get growth up. It's also true that we have to try to work with our trading partners to get growth up. And I might just mention Argentina. Our exports to

Argentina have tripled in the last 4 years. That's the sort of thing we're trying to work on with other countries around the world. And it's not going to be easier quick. We're basically restructuring the American economy at a time when the whole world is in a rebuilding process. But I'm hopeful.

[*At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.*]

Argentina

Q. Mr. Clinton, can you tell us what you want to achieve with this visit?

The President. Well, first of all, I want to just get to know President Menem a little better. He is the first Latin American leader I have received here at the White House. I admire very much the program of economic reform that Argentina has pursued under his leadership, their respect for human rights, their support for democracy. I was especially grateful for the position taken in the recent issue with Guatemala. And there are lots of things we have to talk about.

Q. Mr. President, do you agree that Argentina is leading Latin America?

The President. Do I believe Argentina's a leader in Latin America? Absolutely. I hope that we can explore stronger and broader trade relations. I hope that we can continue to work together on the problems in the hemisphere. I'm going to ask President Menem for his views on the situation in Haiti, for example, where I very much want to see democracy restored. And I wanted him to come here and to be the first Latin American leader to come because of the remarkable, some would say astonishing, progress in Argentina in the last couple of years.

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:35 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.